



Mental Health, Mental Wellness, and Suicide Prevention

The non-profit organization, Cook Center for Human Connection, brings together the best organizations, programs, and products to prevent suicide, provide mental health support, and enhance human connections essential for people to thrive. In an increasingly isolated world, human connection is more important than ever. By strengthening human connection and providing avenues to mental health support for those most in need, the [Cook Center for Human Connection](#) is dedicated to promoting mental wellness and eliminating suicide.

National State of Emergency. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP), and the Children’s Hospital Association (CHA) declared a National State of Emergency in Children’s Mental Health. “We have witnessed soaring rates of mental health challenges among children and adolescents...the COVID-19 pandemic, exacerbated the situation that existed prior to the pandemic. Children and families have experienced enormous adversity and disruption...soaring rates of depression, anxiety, trauma, loneliness, and suicidality will have lasting impacts on them, their families, and their communities. We must identify strategies to meet these challenges through innovation and action.” ⁽¹⁾

New Mexico. New Mexico is first in the nation for suicide in youth 10 – 17 years old, and suicide is the second leading cause of death in New Mexico for youth 10 - 17 years old. ⁽²⁾ Tragically, youth suicide is the second leading cause of death among children and young adults ages 10 to 24 nationwide. ⁽³⁾ Additionally, according to the 2017 New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey (YRRS), New Mexico’s high school students engaged in risky behaviors at higher rates when compared to the national average in 10 of 14 indicators. Risky behaviors are linked to poorer physical and mental health, wellness, and academic outcomes that have lifelong consequences. ⁽⁴⁾

Parents and caregivers – the missing link. Parents and caregivers feel ill equipped to meet these mental health challenges, yet informed parents can be the strongest protective factors in supporting the mental health of their children. ⁽⁵⁾ Building protective factors is proven to reduce risk and create optimal outcomes for all children, youth, and families with generational benefits: “changes in parenting can have an effect not just on children but even on grandchildren.” ⁽⁶⁾

Proposed solution. The Cook Center for Human Connection is proposing its innovative program and unprecedented mental health services to equip parents, improve human connections, and build protective factors for children and families. The program services are for all parents and caregivers, all demographics, and all age groups. The program is especially impactful in rural areas where there is a lack of access to mental health resources and for families with a low socioeconomic status (SES). A low SES status is associated with more frequent mental health problems. ⁽⁷⁾



The proposed solution includes the following components.

ParentGuidance.org. [ParentGuidance.org](https://www.parentguidance.org) provides access to free on-demand courses developed and delivered by licensed therapists. The parent driven courses provide video direct instruction with easy-to-use information and application practices. Courses include: (1) Help with Your Child's Mental Health Development, (2) Help Managing Mental Health Symptoms, (3) Self-Help Courses for Parents, and (4) Featured Courses (child anxiety, depression, bullying, social media, addiction, and suicidality).

Coaching. Coaching is provided to parents and university students. The coaching uses a research-based, and evidence-based model tested in therapeutic centers. Coaching includes weekly 30-minute coaching sessions (phone or video conference) with a trained and qualified coach, a curriculum app with Roadmap options, and text messaging for immediate support (responses within 24 hours).

Mental Health Series. The virtual monthly Mental Health Series will be delivered through each school district and participating organizations to parents, caregivers, educators, and university students. The Mental Health Series addresses the urgent concerns of families including depression, anxiety, bullying, suicidality, addiction, and trauma. Software tools engage participants. Responses will provide important intel on immediate needs, stressors, and concerns.

My Life is Worth Living. [My Life is Worth Living™](https://www.mylifeisworthliving.com) is the first animated series that models the human connection shown to be protective against suicide. The series tells stories of characters who face difficult issues that young people deal with and shows their evolutions. This award-winning series was made in collaboration with leading suicide prevention experts and Wonder Media. Featured as one of the suggested resources on the 988 Suicide Prevention Lifeline, My Life Is Worth Living models for parents, caregivers, and the adults in a young person's life the right behaviors and actions to promote meaningful discussion and healing.

Professional development. The interactive onsite professional learning and development includes synchronous and asynchronous learning, lively discussion boards, and breakout sessions. Professional development will be tailored to meet the specific needs and objectives of school districts, universities, and early childhood centers.

Professional development offerings include:

- Understanding of mental health challenges
- Awareness of the issues students and families are facing
- Knowledge of and access to free trusted resources
- QPR certification for suicide prevention (if applicable)
- Introduction to tools and resources for parents and university students



The proposed equitable, statewide, parent focused program provides the needed missing link – parents and caregivers. Joining in a common goal, this implementation supports the mission and purpose of the state, schools, safe school initiatives, universities, parent organizations, and communities.

Districts/Organizations

Organizations	Quantity	Students Served
Districts and Charter Schools	89	362,326
Universities	21	111,807
Early Childhood (regional cohorts)	4	126,150
Total organizations	114	
Proposed student/family access		600,283

The Cook Center for Human Connection leverages local resources to create a cost-effective solution building capacity and taking weight off the current overloaded mental health systems. Partnering with various national organizations creates a strong national network to draw from on resources and alliances. These organizations include Mental Health America (MHA), the national School Superintendents Association (AASA), and American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

As part of the implementation, the Cook Center for Human Connection engage in state, district, school, university, and community mental health awareness promotions and events.

Contact Information

Adele Winter, Director of Advancement
 Cook Center for Human Connection
 (609) 464-1607
 Adele.winter@cookcenter.org
 Cookcenter.org

Endnotes

1. “AAP-AACAP-CHA Declaration of a National Emergency in Child and Adolescent Mental Health.” American Academy of Pediatrics. October 19, 2021. <https://www.aap.org/en/advocacy/child-and-adolescent-healthy-mental-development/aap-aacap-cha-declaration-of-a-national-emergency-in-child-and-adolescent-mental-health/>.
2. New Mexico Public Education Department, Behavioral Health website: <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/safe-healthy-schools/behavioral-health/>.



3. "Leading Causes of Death and Injury" - PDFs|Injury Center|CDC 2019. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2019. <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/LeadingCauses.html>.
4. New Mexico Public Education Department, Behavioral Health website: <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/safe-healthy-schools/behavioral-health/>.
5. King K. A., Vidourek R. A., Yockey R. A., Merianos A. L 2018 "Impact of Parenting Behaviours on Adolescent Suicide Based on Age of Adolescent", Journal of Child and Family Studies, August 21, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-018-1220-3>.
6. Oregon State University, Positive parenting can have lasting impact for generations, 2009. Website: <https://today.oregonstate.edu/archives/2009/sep/positive-parenting-can-have-lasting-impact-generations#:~:text=The%20researchers%20found%20that%20children,and%20have%20better%20self%20esteem>.
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